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Czechoslovak Artist Defects Here While on Tour

To Be 'Witness' on Regime—
Cites Obstacles in Work

By PETER KIHSS

A Czechoslovak illustrator has defected here to "speak up as a witness against the Communist regime" in his homeland—fully aware, he says, that a similar defector a year ago stayed here three weeks and then went back to Czechoslovakia.

With the new defection by Ladislav Svatos, 33-year-old member of a tourist group, it became known that the 1963 defector had once again changed his mind and tried a dramatic escape to Austria last summer.

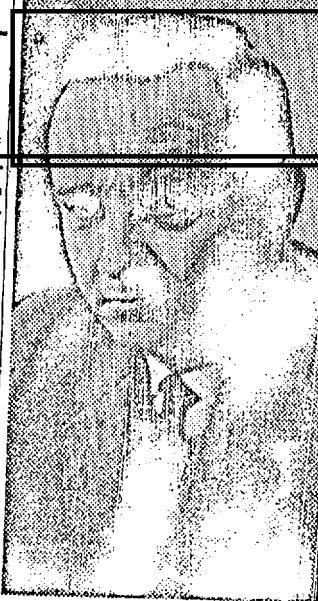
According to a Czechoslovak press report, and word to exiles here, the earlier defector, Dr. Jaroslav Kremel, had been barred from resuming his medical practice and kept under investigation after his return, although he was not arrested.

Captured and Sentenced

Last July 10, he sought to drive under a frontier barricade with a car whose top had supposedly been rigged to slide off—but did not. He attempted suicide, was captured, and tried and sentenced in Ostrava on Oct. 17 for illegally leaving the country, espionage in giving information to the Central Intelligence Agency here and for injuring the nation's interests abroad.

The latest defector, Mr. Svatos, has been for three years art editor of the Publishing House for Children's Books, a Government enterprise in Prague. He was one of 47 members of an artists' group on a United States tour arranged by Cedok, the official travel agency. The group arrived here Nov. 5, and is to return next Wednesday.

Mr. Svatos said in an interview that he had got in touch



The New York Times
Ladislav Svatos, after his defection here yesterday.

with a friend here who had earlier defected in Europe, and that he left the tourist party for good last Sunday while his assigned roommate was out.

He has since been questioned by the International Rescue Committee, a voluntary group aiding refugees from Communism. The committee said it would represent him next week in a formal bid for asylum and immigrant status.

Partly in English and partly through translators, Mr. Svatos asserted he was not a Communist and had found it "increasingly difficult" to submit to the "official art line." On occasion, he said, some of his work had been rejected as "abstract," although he said it wasn't.

He said that he had "tried to stay out of trouble," but that all Czechoslovaks were subject to "an atmosphere of constant unrest and nervous irritation," "secret data"

Recalls a Defector Last Year
Who Later Went Back

which supports "creative activity."

Most Czechoslovaks, he said, believe that the easing of conditions in the last year was "a temporary political maneuver" to "overcome the passive resistance of the people." Youths, he said, "do not believe in the future of Communism" and oppose its "inhumanity."

"I am not motivated by economic reasons," Mr. Svatos said. As a part-time editor, he said, he had been paid 900 crowns a month—the official exchange rate is seven crowns to \$1—and had earned 2,000 crowns a month free-lancing.

No Family Back Home

In contrast to Dr. Kremel who had a wife and a 2-year-old daughter in Czechoslovakia, Mr. Svatos said he was unmarried and had no family back home. He said he knew "what happened to Dr. Jaroslav Kremel," and realized his "beginnings" here might be difficult.

Dr. Kremel's first defection turned out to have been first publicized in Czechoslovakia in an essay last March 26 in Rude Pravo, Communist party organ, five months after his return. The article described his talks with named Czechoslovaks here, the rescue committee and the C. I. A. It said the C. I. A. had paid him \$250.

His sentence by the Ostrava District Court was reported in the Oct. 18 issue of Prace, central organ of the Czechoslovak Trade Union Federation. That article said that Dr. Kremel, in his stay here, had been "in touch with treacherous exiles" and had given "information important for the defense of the republic to C. I. A. workers," including "secret data."

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